

The Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (P&A) seeks to protect the rights of and to advocate for people with disabilities. We do this by providing information and referral services, case advocacy services, abuse investigation and protective interventions, and community development activities. Brief descriptions of program services are provided below.

Consumer Information Advocates provide information and referral services and short-term advocacy assistance. The Consumer Information Unit is the entry point to P&A for most new callers to the Office. Depending on the need presented, staff may provide information, connect callers to the appropriate P&A unit, or make referrals to relevant outside agencies.

Case Services Advocates and Attorneys implement federal and state P&A mandates to:

- protect the rights of adults and children with disabilities;
- intervene on behalf of children with disabilities who are experiencing difficulty obtaining relevant educational supports;
- provide legal representation and assistance to individuals seeking administrative or judicial remedies in cases involving disability-related issues;
- through the Client Assistance Program (CAP), advocate for individuals who apply for or receive services from agencies funded under the federal

Rehabilitation Act (primarily the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and the Board of Education and Services for the Blind);

- investigate complaints of abuse or neglect of individuals with mental illness, and pursue administrative and legal remedies on behalf of eligible people;
- assist beneficiaries of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) who need information, advice, advocacy or legal services in order to secure or regain employment;
- increase the availability of assistive technology devices, information, education and advocacy assistance;
- in conformance with Agency priorities, develop and pursue long term projects to challenge systemic problems within human service and educational structures.

Abuse Investigation Division (AID)

staff operate under state law to receive and assess reports of abuse and neglect of adults with mental retardation and monitor the quality and results of internal abuse and neglect investigations conducted by the mental retardation service system; directly investigate allegations of abuse and neglect that involve death, or caretakers who are not employed by service providing agencies. When warranted, AID also investigates allegations arising from within the service system. AID staff makes recommendations for protective services, refer cases of substantiated abuse to State's Attorneys, and take immediate steps to ensure that

urgent situations receive an adequate response.

Administrative staff implements the overall policy of the Agency, ensure accountability, and coordinate and support the activities of the operating divisions. The unit includes legislative and administrative support staff and supports the Community Development function of P&A.

By statute, governance and administrative functions are vested in the Executive Director, who is assisted by the Assistant Director and advised on matters of service priorities, advocacy policy and issues affecting people with disabilities by the Protection and Advocacy Board.

Fatality Review Board for Persons with Disabilities

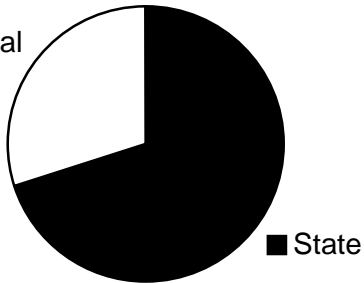
In February 2002, Governor Rowland issued Executive Order #25 in response to concerns voiced by family members and other advocates about the adequacy of existing methods to review and investigate deaths of clients of the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR). Executive Order #25 created the Fatality Review Board for Persons with Disabilities (FRB) at OPA and designates OPA's Executive Director as Chair of the FRB.

The FRB is charged with reviewing all deaths of people with mental retardation in Connecticut who are DMR clients and conducting investigations into the circumstances surrounding those deaths, which, in the opinion of the Executive Director, warrant a full, independent investigation.

Funding Sources

In addition to state General Fund monies, the agency receives funding from the Social Security Administration (Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security Program), U.S. Department of Education (Client Assistance, Protection and Advocacy for Individual Rights, and Assistive Technology Programs); and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act, Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and Protection and Advocacy for the Help America Vote Act).

□ Federal



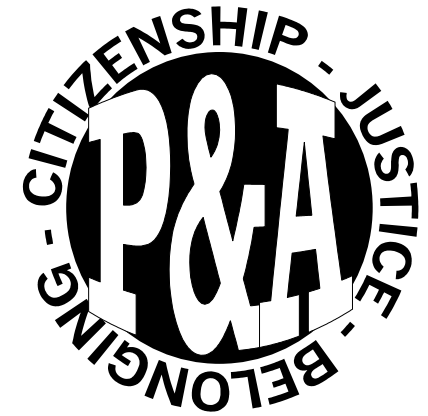
■ State

Looking for information, publications or an update on legislative issues? Do you want to read the latest disability news? Do you have a question that you would like to e-mail to the agency? Interested in completing a survey to inform OPA about issues affecting people with disabilities in Connecticut? If yes, please visit OPA's website at:

<http://www.ct.gov/opapd>

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State of Connecticut
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for Persons with Disabilities
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PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

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*This information is available
in alternative format upon request*